

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 GUATEM 02896 102308Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----102343Z 124827 /70  
O 102221Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5936  
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL BELIZE IMMEDIATE  
USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 581

S E C R E T GUATEMALA 2896

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, GT, UK, BH  
SUBJ: BELIZE DISPUTE

REF: STATE 102154, GUATEMALA 2831

1. FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA CALLED ME IN TODAY ON BELIZE. HE SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED MY APPROACH TO HIM WITH PRESIDENT AND COULD NOW RESPOND TO OUR INQUIRY REGARDING THEIR MINIMUM TERRITORIAL POSITION. THIS POSITION, HE SAID, WAS THE MONKEY RIVER. HE THEN GAVE ME A PAPER DEFINING THE MONKEY RIVER LINE IN TWO ALTERNATIVES, AS FOLLOWS:

A. FIRST ALTERNATIVE

" LINE STARTING AT THE MOUTH OF THE MONKEY RIVER, UPSTREAM TO ITS SOURCES AND THEN FOLLOWING THE COURSE OF THE CHIQUIBUL RIVER DOWN TO THE MERIDIAN LINE OF GARBUTT FALLS AND THEN FOLLOWING THIS LINE STRAIGHT NORTH TO ITS INTERSECTION WITH PARALLEL 17 DEGREES 49 MINUTES."

B. SECOND ALTERNATIVE

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"A LINE STARTING AT THE MOUTH OF THE MONKEY RIVER, UPSTREAM TO ITS SOURCES AND THEN THE DIVISION OF WATERS OF THE MAYA MOUNTAINS IN A SOUTHWESTERLY DIRECTION DOWN TO THE MERIDIAN LINE OF GARBUTT FALLS AND FOLLOWING THIS LINE STRAIGHT NORTH TO ITS INTERSECTION WITH PARALLEL 17 DEGREES 49 MINUTES."

2. HE SAID THEY WOULD HAVE A SLIGHT PREFERENCE FOR THE FIRST ALTERNATIVE, WHICH OFFERED GUATEMALA A LITTLE MORE TERRITORY, BUT THEY COULD ACCEPT THE SECOND ALTERNATIVE AS WELL. HE ADDED THAT THEIR POSITION ALSO INVOLVED A CORRIDOR TO THE HIGH SEAS AND SAID HE WOULD GIVE ME A MAP TOMORROW INDICATING THE LIMITS OF THIS CORRIDOR.

3. HE SAID THEY CONSIDER IT VITAL TO HAVE THE BORDER AREA RUN FROM THE MOUTH OF THE MONKEY RIVER BECAUSE THIS WAS THE MINIMUM, REASONABLE POSITION THEY BELIEVED WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE CONGRESS, MILITARY, AND GUATEMALAN PEOPLE. IT WAS WHAT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH BELIEVED COULD BE SATISFACTORILY EXPLAINED TO THE PUBLIC, BUT NO LESS THAN THAT COULD BE.

4. I ASKED IF THIS WAS A RIGID, FINAL POSITION. HE SAID IT WAS. HE SAID HE HAD WANTED TO BE SURE OF THIS, TOO, AND HAD CONFIRMED WITH PRESIDENT LAUGERUD THAT IT WAS A FIRM POSITION.

5. FOREIGN MINISTER REPEATED THAT THEIR POSITION WAS BASED ON THEIR EVALUATION OF WHAT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO GUATEMALAN PUBLIC, INCLUDING CONGRESS AND MILITARY, AS AN HONORABLE COMPROMISE. HE SAID EXECUTIVE BRANCH COULD NOT GUARANTEE, OF COURSE, THAT SUCH COMPROMISE WOULD GET THROUGH CONGRESS BUT THEY WOULD USE THEIR BEST EFFORTS TO GET IT THROUGH AND TO WIN PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE FOR IT. HE SAID THIS MATTER WAS SO IMPORTANT TO THEM THAT HE WOULD BE WILLING TO FLY TO WASHINGTON AT ANY TIME TO MAKE ANY FURTHER EXPLANATION THAT MIGHT BE NECESSARY.

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6. COMMENT: AS THIS POSITION REPRESENTS NO CONCESSION FROM GOG'S EARLIER POSITION, BRITISH WILL TAKE NO ENCOURAGEMENT FROM IT. MOREOVER, THERE WAS NO HINT OF FLEXIBILITY IN FONMIN'S STATEMENTS DESCRIBING THEIR POSITIONS; ON THE CONTRARY, HIS STATEMENTS, IF TAKEN AT FACE VALUE, SUGGEST THAT THEY HAVE NO FLEXIBILITY. THEY REINFORCE OUR VIEW (GUATEMALA'S 2263) THAT THE GOG DOES NOT FEEL ABLE TO AGREE TO ANY SETTLEMENT OF BELIZE DISPUTE--SHORT OF CESSION OF A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF BELIZE--DURING THE YEAR REMAINING OF LAUGERUD'S TERM OF OFFICE. NEVERTHELESS, WE NOTE AGAIN THAT BRITISH HAVE NOT MADE A CONCRETE TERRITORIAL OFFER SINCE GOG'S REJECTION OF MOHO RIVER LINE IN 1975 AND IT IS AT LEAST POSSIBLE THAT TABLING BY BRITISH AT THIS TIME OF SPECIFIC COUNTER-OFFER MIGHT INITIATE A PROCESS OF GARGAINING WHICH COULD EVENTUALLY LEAD THE TWO SIDES INTO A COMPROMISE SHORT OF THE MONKEY RIVER.

7. WHEN DEPARTMENT CONVEYS THIS RESPONSE TO BRITISH, WE ASK IT ALSO TO CONSIDER AUTHORIZING US TO INFORM UK CONSUL MCQUILLAN HERE. MCQUILLAN HAS BEEN A KEY PARTICIPANT IN

CONTACTS ON BELIZE AND HAS BEEN MOST HELPFUL IN KEEPING US  
INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS.  
BOSTER

SECRET

NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
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